

Mark 8:34-9:1, The Cost of Discipleship
September 10, 1996
H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

1. 8:27-9:13, moves from past inward to the future, focusing on the cost of discipleship (Lafontaine and Beernaert).
 - a) Questions about Prophecies (Past) 8:27-28 9:11-13
 - b) ID of Jesus (Present, Secret) 8:29-30 9:7-10
 - Peter Father
 - c) Prediction (Future, Peter) 8:31-33 9:2-6
 - Passion Res'n
 - d) Cost of Discipleship 8:34-9:1

2. 8:31 is first announcement of the Lord's passion; two more coming. Each of the three is followed by a blunder on the part of one or more of the Twelve, and then by a lesson on the terms of discipleship (summarized in 8:34):

Announcement	Blunder	Discipleship
a) 8:31	32-33, Peter	35-9:1, deny yourself
b) 9:31	33-34, Twelve	43-48, take up cross
c) 10:33f	35-37, J/J	38-45, follow me

3. Today: 8:34-9:1, Cost of Discipleship
 - a) *Note chiasm here too.*
 - 1) 34, 9:1 "he said"
 - 2) 35, 38 "for whoever" *_hos gar_*
 - 3) 36, 37 "what?" *_ti_*

These are useful to segment the paragraph, but the main structure of the argument seems to flow across these divisions, as expounded below.

 - b) Argument: successive extractions and amplification
 - 1) 34, *Deny self*, take up cross, follow
 - 2) 35, *Deny self* = Lose life to save it, not vv.
 - a> 36-38, don't save life to lose it.
 - b> 9:1, lose life to save it.

A. 34, How to Follow the Lord

Instructions to all (disciples plus multitude) on what it really means to follow him.

1. The multitudes were just "coming after him," staying close to him to see if he would do something nice for them. Many people today "follow after" Jesus in this sense, affiliating themselves with churches, naming his name. But this is a superficial position. Recall the four soils. It is crucial that we be able to distinguish our position among them.

2. True discipleship involves three things of which the multitude has no experience. Each of these is expounded somewhere in 8:27-10:52, one after each of the three announcements of the

Lord's coming sufferings.

- a) Deny yourself. Expounded after the first announcement (8:31), here in 8:35-9:1.
 - 1) Conventional English sense: deny things to yourself. "He didn't take any cookies--he denied himself." To abstain from pleasant things.
 - 2) Here, the sense is much deeper:
 - a> The "self" as the real person, who I am, my experiences, my values, my whole consciousness, the entire life I live.
 - b> Deny myself: declare this "me" of no value, dead. Example: Paul in Phil 3:5-9. He has turned his back on all that was of value to him, all that in which he took pride, all that made him "Saul of Tarsus."
 - 3) This is what the NT commands over and over as "repentance."
 - a> Acts 2:38, "repent and be baptized"
 - b> Acts 3:19, "repent and be converted"
 - c> Acts 8:22, "repent of this thy wickedness"
 - d> Acts 17:30, "God ... commandeth all men everywhere to repent"
 - e> Acts 20:21, Paul testified "repentance toward God, and faith toward our LJC"
 - f> Acts 26:20, Paul showed that men "should repent and turn to God."
 - 4) Can't be saved until you recognize and acknowledge that you are lost! Declare my complete bankruptcy before God.
 - a> He is righteous; I am hopelessly sinful and rebellious.
 - b> He is beautiful; I am ugly and deformed.
 - c> He is wise; I am utterly stupid and ignorant.
 - 5) Many call themselves Christians who have never come to this point of cringing before the holy and righteous God whom they have offended. They still think they're basically OK, and pride themselves on adding God to their collection. They have not denied themselves.
 - 6) We will hear more of this in 8:36-9:1 below.
- b) Take up your cross. Expounded after the second announcement (9:31), in 9:43-48.

We are not surprised to read throughout the NT that Christ was crucified for us. But many people are amazed how often the NT speaks about OUR crucifixion with Christ!

 - 1) The NT book that says this most explicitly and frequently is Gal: 2:20; 5:24; 6:14

- 2) Most detailed teaching in Rom. 6:6 and context.
 - 3) Not just a positional teaching that we take for granted.
Compare
 - a> Rom 8:13 "Mortify the deeds of the body"
 - b> Col 3:5 "Put to death therefore your members that are upon the earth"
 - c> Gal 5:24, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."
 - 4) We can only do this because we have denied ourselves, recognizing that we are all unworthiness and that only our Lord matters.
 - 5) The point: from the point of view of the flesh, the Christian's life is one of discipline and even suffering, not comfort and pleasure. The body of flesh remains with us, and we must keep it down. Like an athlete in training. The world says, "Look out for # 1." The Lord says, "Take up your cross daily, and follow me."
 - 6) Expounded further after second announcement, in 9:43-48.
- c) Follow me (not just "after me," but imitate me). Expounded after the third announcement (10:33,34), in 10:38-45. The contrast between "follow after me" (translated "come after me") and "follow me" is explicit. Not just association with the Lord, but imitation of him.
3. 36-9:1 amplifies more fully the first of these three requirements, "deny yourself."

B. 35 summarizes the rest of the paragraph

1. "Life" 35 and "soul" 36-37 are the same Greek word, *psyche* (from which we get "psychology"), usually translated "soul."
 - a) Popular theology equates this with the immaterial part of the person, which flies away to heaven or hell after death. But this is a Greek idea.
 - b) The Hebrew equivalent is *nephesh* "breath, life," which can stand for a complete person (body and spirit), as can also the Greek word (Acts 2:41; 7:14; 1 Pet 3:20; compare Mark 10:45 with 1 Tim 2:6).
 - c) The basic meaning here is certainly "life," following up on the Lord's interchange with Peter. Peter wanted the Lord to cling to physical life, as a worldlyling would; the Lord here generalizes the approach he is taking.
 - d) More deeply, it is our personhood, our life-experience, our "self," which is at stake. Recall that this is an exposition of what it means to "deny oneself." If we seek to preserve our

own selfhood, it will be destroyed, but if we repent, declare bankruptcy, and find ourselves in the LJC, we will be the persons God intends us to be.

2. 35a (the wrong way) summarizes 36-38. Unbelievers sometimes complain that their sense of pride, of identity, of self-worth prevents them from repenting. If they received the Lord, their life as they know it would go away, and they don't want that. They are trying to hold on to their self-hood, their own life experience. But in the end they will lose these things when they stand before God as their judge.
3. 35b (the right way) summarizes 9:1. If we give up all claims to our own life experience and take the place of bondslaves to the LJC, we will discover a life that never perishes.

C. 36-38 refines 35a

1. 36-37, Why should one not lose one's "life"? Because it is more valuable than all the things that people usually confuse with it. The unbeliever fears to lose wealth, physical comforts, satisfaction of lusts, etc. But when the chips are down, he realizes that these are not where the real value is.
 - a) 36, if you gain all of these, you cannot take them with you when you die. Luke 12:15, "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." But many people think that it does.
 - b) 37, If you were about to lose your life and knew it, what would you not offer to bring it back? Example: the Shah of Iran was one of the richest men on earth, even after the coup that sent him fleeing to the US. He became ill and as he faced death, offered all of his wealth to any doctor that could cure him. Though he had amassed untold wealth in an attempt to create the best life possible, when breath was about to slip away, he would gladly have given it all up to survive.
 - c) Lesson: Don't heed Satan's lie that our life consists of our possessions and carnal satisfactions.
2. 38, How might one lose the soul? By being ashamed of the LJC, in which case he will deny us before his Father. Matt 7:23, "I never knew you; depart from me." Matt 10:33, "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."
 - a) All the mansions on earth cannot replace our heavenly home.
 - b) All the pleasures on earth cannot replace the joys of seeing the Father.
 - c) All the friends on earth cannot replace the LJC.

D. 9:1 refines 35b

Those who do give up their lives, their plans, their aspirations for the Lord will find them replaced abundantly. In fact, among the

Twelve are those who will enjoy the dream of every true Jew, to see God's kingdom coming in power. Probably fulfilled in the Transfiguration, though John's vision on Patmos would also qualify.